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**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
PANDEMIC (H1N1) 2009 INFLUENZA VIRUS
INFECTION CONTROL RECOMMENDATIONS
IN AN OUTPATIENT SETTING
UPDATED SEPTEMBER 23, 2009**

This is an update of the August 20, 2009 California Department of Public Health (CDPH) recommendations for pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza in outpatient settings. The only changes in this update are in the period of time that patients should self-isolate at home (now 24 hours after resolution of fever), deletion of questions to be asked of patients about their exposure, and simplified recommended signage. The August 20 update took into account the change in the CDPH definition of a suspected case (www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Documents/H1N1UpdatedRecforHealthCareSettings.pdf) and the relationship between this new definition and the Cal/OSHA Aerosol Transmissible Disease Standard. Further information is available at <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/SwineInfluenzaHealthPros.aspx>

Case definitions for infection with Pandemic (H1N1) Influenza for infection control purposes

A **confirmed case** of pandemic (H1N1) influenza is a person with an acute febrile respiratory illness with laboratory confirmed pandemic (H1N1) influenza by one or more of the following tests:

1. real-time RT-PCR
2. viral culture

A **probable case** of pandemic (H1N1) influenza is a person with an acute febrile respiratory illness who is positive for influenza A, but negative for H1 and H3 by influenza RT-PCR.

A **suspected case** of pandemic (H1N1) influenza infection in California is

Any patient less than 60 years of age with a fever ($>37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ or 100°F) and new onset of cough, or

Any patient whom a health care provider believes, based on the patient's history and illness, to have a high likelihood of being infected with pandemic (H1N1) influenza virus.

Situational Guidance

Clinical Assessment

These guidelines are intended to provide a general approach. Clinicians are urged to continue their normal practice to every extent possible and apply sound clinical judgment to the approach of each individual patient. It is important to remember that the clinical symptoms and presentation of pandemic (H1N1) influenza may be similar to other respiratory illnesses and should be considered in the context of a complete differential diagnosis.

Exposure (to a confirmed or probable pandemic (H1N1) influenza case or to a geographic area where pandemic (H1N1) influenza has been identified) alone is not an indication for hospital or emergency room referral.

Patients who report mild illness AND who have no underlying medical conditions that place them at higher risk of complications from influenza need not be seen in the office.

These patients can be screened by phone, given symptomatic treatment recommendations, and instructed to contact their physician for any signs of worsening severity of illness. With the current limitations in confirmatory testing capacity, for typical clinical management purposes, **patients with mild illness should NOT be tested for influenza because screening tests will not influence treatment decisions.**

Patients who report serious illness should be further evaluated; the most appropriate setting for the evaluation of a severely ill patient may be the hospital emergency room. Do **NOT** send patients to an emergency department unless you believe hospital admission may be warranted.

Any unusual clusters of febrile respiratory illness should be reported to your local health department immediately. Local public health authorities may request testing of patients associated with a suspected outbreak, even if the patient's illness is mild.

Patients with symptoms of acute respiratory illness should have elective procedures postponed until after symptoms have subsided.

This guidance is restricted to infection control issues. Other resources for the clinician can be located in the CDC and CDPH websites:

[http://www.cdc.gov/\(H1N1\)flu/guidance/](http://www.cdc.gov/(H1N1)flu/guidance/) and <http://ww2.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/default.aspx>. A guidance for identifying and caring for patients is available on the CDC site.

Patient Triage

There are three opportunities to perform triage in a timely manner to prevent unnecessary exposure of other patients and staff to pandemic (H1N1) influenza. Health care workers at the point of first contact should be trained to screen patients for pandemic (H1N1) influenza.

1. Signs in appropriate languages for the community should be posted at entrances. An example of a sign follows.

TO ALL PATIENTS

To STOP the spread of flu,

Do you have a

- Fever?
- New cough?
- Runny nose?
- Sore throat?

PLEASE

- Tell the front desk staff
- Ask for a mask to put over your nose and mouth
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your sleeve
- Throw away tissues into the nearest trash can
- Wash hands after touching your nose, mouth, or eyes

- If possible, triage patients when they call for an appointment. Ask if the patient has symptoms of acute respiratory illness (fever $>37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ (100°F) **plus** one or more of the following: cough, sore throat, rhinorrhea or nasal congestion.

The patient with symptoms of influenza-like illness should be encouraged to:

- Stay home and keep away from others as much as possible, including avoiding travel, for at least 24 hours after fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. .
- Seek medical care for severe respiratory symptoms such as difficulty breathing or for dehydration from vomiting and/or diarrhea. They may also need to seek early medical attention if they have a chronic health condition that puts them at risk for the complications of influenza.
- If the patient must go into the community (e.g., for medical care), they should be instructed to wear a mask over their nose and mouth when within six feet of other persons.

3. If the patient enters the clinic or office, they should be assessed immediately for symptoms of acute respiratory illness. If symptomatic, they should not remain in the waiting room but should be taken immediately to an examination room and the door should remain closed or be asked to wait outdoors, weather permitting.
 - Provide the patient with and instructions on how to wear a surgical mask over their nose and mouth. The mask should remain on **at all times** while in the clinic or office waiting area, examination room and during transportation to the emergency department (if necessary.)
 - Coordinate with and follow instructions from your local health department on respiratory specimen collection.
 - If the patient must be transported to a hospital by ambulance, the hospital emergency room and the ambulance transport service should be notified of the possible swine flu infection diagnosis and instructed to take the appropriate infection control precautions.

Personal Protective Equipment

1. Health care workers assigned to outpatient clinic or physician's offices should have immediate access to personal protective equipment including gowns, gloves, respirators, masks, and goggles or face shields.
2.
 - Health care workers should wear disposable, long sleeve gowns fastened in the back when direct face-to-face contact with a patient with risk factors for swine influenza infection or the patient has signs of symptoms of acute respiratory infection and is in respiratory distress.
 - Disposable, non-sterile gloves should be worn when contact with respiratory secretions, blood and other body fluids are anticipated.
 - Gloves should be put on immediately before patient contact and removed when physical contact with the patient is no longer necessary. Gloves should be changed between each patient. Use of gloves is **not** a substitute for hand washing.
 - A fit-tested N-95 disposable respirator* should be worn when entering the room of a patient with suspected swine influenza infection.
 - Eye protectors (eye shields or goggles) should be worn when in direct face-to-face contact with the patient.
3. Hands should be washed with soap (plain or antimicrobial) and water after contact with all patients and environmental surfaces in close proximity to the patient. If hands are not visibly soiled with respiratory secretions, blood or other body fluids, an alcohol-based hand rub can be used.

4. Healthcare workers should be instructed not to touch the mucous membranes of their nose, eye or mouth with unwashed hands.

Patient Care Equipment

- Reusable examination equipment such as stethoscopes and blood pressure cuffs and should be disinfected with a properly diluted, EPA-approved, germicidal solution after use on a patient with influenza-like illness.
- Environmental surfaces should be disinfected with a properly diluted EPA-approved disinfectant after the patient leaves the examination room and before admitting another patient to that room. If demand for examination rooms is high, leave room unoccupied for at least as long as it takes for disinfectant to dry. It is not possible at this time to recommend an optimal time to leave rooms unoccupied between patients.
- Disposable examination gowns and sheets may be disposed of as regular waste.
- No special precautions are required for the handling of laundry.
- Within the clinic, high touch surfaces and items (doorknobs, elevator buttons, restrooms, chairs, etc.) should be regularly cleaned and disinfected. Information can be found at http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/gl_envirioninfection.html.

Patients/Family Instructions

For information regarding the care of a sick person at home consult the CDPH (<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Documents/Takingcareofasickperson.pdf>) or CDC (http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm) recommendations for homecare of persons with influenza and other respiratory infections.

Resources

A Model Respiratory Protection Program for facility use is posted on the CAHF Web site. Fit-testing procedures are detailed in Appendix A.
http://www.cahfdownload.com/cahf/dpp/CAHF_ModelRespiratoryProtectionProgram.pdf

Guidance from Cal/OSHA on the emergency use of respirators is available at:
<http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/SwineFlu/SwineFlu.htm>.

Information on respirators, including general instructions for use is available at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/swineflu/>

An on line respiratory medical evaluation site is available at: <http://www.respexam.com/>

* Cal/OSHA requires a respirator program for the use of N95 respirators that includes medical evaluation, fit-testing and training. However, these requirements should not prevent a facility from providing N95 respirators to employees as an interim emergency measure. Medical evaluation, training and fit-testing can then be done as soon as is reasonably possible.